

TAIWAN, HONG KONG, MACAO

April 17, 2025

Taiwan, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and the Macao Special Administrative Region are the focus of the Chinese Communist Party's constitutional principle of "one country, two systems" (OCTS) that former paramount leader Deng Xiaoping proposed as a framework for reunifying the People's Republic of China (PRC) with territories that it claimed but did not control. The principle's basic idea is that these territories could maintain autonomous economic and administrative systems if they acknowledged the national sovereignty and accepted the political and foreign policy oversight of the PRC. Deng first articulated the OCTS phrasing in 1982, but he had expressed its essence in a famous "Letter to Taiwan Compatriots" published on January 1, 1979, after changing the Party's goal from "liberating Taiwan" to "achieving unification" the year before. He then extended the principle to the Party's dealings with Hong Kong and Macao in 1984.

Taiwan has been governed separately from mainland China since the Chinese Civil War ended in 1949, when the defeated Republic of China (ROC) regime evacuated to the island following the Communist victory. No president or government of now-democratic Taiwan, whether from the mainland-leaning Kuomintang (KMT) or the autonomy-leaning Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), has accepted the idea of PRC sovereignty, whether under the OCTS framework or otherwise. For extensive detail on Taiwan-related issues, please visit the Center for China Analysis's [Taiwan Policy Database](#).

The OCTS principle has been implemented in Hong Kong and Macao and is the basis for their designation as Special Autonomous Regions (SARs). The Qing dynasty (1644–1912) ceded small parts of Hong Kong to the British Empire in 1842 and 1860 and granted a 99-year lease to the rest of the colony in 1898. The Sino-British Declaration of 1984 decided that the United Kingdom would transfer sovereignty of the entire territory to the PRC in 1997 on the condition that Hong Kong would "enjoy a high degree of autonomy" except for foreign and defense affairs and that its "capitalist system and lifestyle shall remain unchanged for 50 years." In practice, Beijing had already cultivated a pro-Beijing political and business elite in Hong Kong, and it progressively enhanced its political influence and eroded civil liberties after the handover. Following widespread pro-democracy demonstrations such as Occupy Central in 2011–12, the Umbrella Movement in 2014, and

the massive 2019–20 protests, Beijing imposed a National Security Law that crushed political opposition by effectively outlawing dissent.

Portugal ruled Macao as a colony from 1557 to 1951 (with the Qing dynasty formally ceding the territory in 1887), as an overseas province of Portugal from 1951 to 1976, and as a “territory under Portuguese administration” from 1976 until 1999. Following the Carnation Revolution, when a military coup toppled the authoritarian regime and restored democracy in Portugal, Lisbon embraced decolonization. The Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration of 1987, which determined that Portugal would hand over Macao in 1999, stated that Macao would enjoy self-governance in domestic affairs and that its economic, legal, and social system would remain unchanged for 50 years. Once more, pro-Beijing business elites already controlled ethnic Chinese affairs in Macao, and the Party has gradually cultivated an ever-more mainland-oriented cadre of local politicians and officials.

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Institutions

The **Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference** (CPPCC) is a political advisory body that forms the bedrock of the Communist Party’s “United Front” system, which seeks to enforce loyalty, mobilize support, and gather information from people and groups outside the Party. Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao are significant targets of its work. The CPPCC has a 2,172-member National Committee, which includes a 323-person Standing Committee, which in turn includes 23 deputy national-level vice chairmen and one national-level chairman who sits on the Party’s elite seven-member Politburo Standing Committee. The National Committee meets annually at the “Two Sessions” each March, the Standing Committee meets approximately every two or three months, and the chairman and vice chairmen meet roughly monthly. There are also regional CPPCC committees at the provincial, prefectural, and county levels. These committees include representatives from the Communist Party, its eight officially endorsed satellite parties, government-organized nongovernment organizations known as people’s organizations, various professions and social groups (including designated spots for “ethnic minorities” and “religions”), and specially invited dignitaries from mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and other countries. The CPPCC does not have direct legislative or policymaking power, but its consultative function is an important dimension of Party governance that has grown in prominence under Xi’s leadership, especially as rising authoritarianism and falling growth make social tensions more pronounced and more important to manage well. The CPPCC National Committee includes ten special committees that focus on specific topics and are led by ministerial-level Party cadres. The **CPPCC Committee for Liaison with**

Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Overseas Chinese oversees related political consultations and policy proposals.

The **CCP United Front Work Department (UFWD)**, also known as the Central United Front Work Department, is a ministerial-level functional department under the CCP Central Committee that is usually led by a director with deputy national-level rank. Xi further enhanced the UFWD's status after the 20th Party Congress in October 2022 by making its incoming leader a member of the Party's 24-member Politburo for the first time since 1977. The UFWD implements the Party's efforts to expand and exert its influence over social groups and prominent individuals who are not directly affiliated with the Party. The UFWD engages with a diverse array of groups, including members of satellite parties, independent individuals, ethnic minorities, religious leaders, overseas Chinese, private entrepreneurs, professionals in emerging sectors like social media influencers, and residents of Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. By maintaining contacts, providing guidance, and often rewarding Beijing-friendly leaders within these groups, the UFWD ensures their alignment with the Party and gathers useful policy recommendations and political intelligence. In 2018, the UFWD absorbed and now operates the ministerial-level State Council Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, which is responsible for communicating with and influencing the Chinese diaspora, and the deputy ministerial-level State Administration for Religious Affairs, which manages the operations of China's five officially sanctioned religions (Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism). It also exercises leadership over the ministerial-level National Ethnic Affairs Commission, which oversees policy work and ethnological research related to China's 55 officially recognized non-Han ethnic minorities, and the ministerial-level All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, a "people's organization" of business executives that helps the Party manage and liaise with the Chinese private sector. The UFWD Third Bureau is responsible for work related to Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan.

The **National People's Congress (NPC)** is China's unicameral legislature and is constitutionally defined as the highest organ of state power in the People's Republic of China, with supremacy over parts of government such as the Presidency, State Council, Supreme People's Court, Supreme People's Procuratorate, National Supervisory Commission, and Central Military Commission. In fact, the Party is the supreme authority to which the NPC and all others answer. With 2,977 deputies, it is the largest legislature in the world, but it only convenes once per year at the annual "Two Sessions" each March. Most of its powers and day-to-day work are delegated to a 175-member Standing Committee, which includes 14 deputy national-level vice chairmen (the first-ranked of whom sits on the Politburo) and one chairman who sits on the Politburo Standing Committee. The NPC Standing Committee (NPCSC) is a permanent body that holds bimonthly meetings and passes most legislation and personnel decisions, although only the full NPC can amend the PRC Constitution. The NPC is elected by provincial people's congresses, which are

elected by prefectural people's congresses, which are in turn elected by county people's congresses, which are directly elected. The Party controls every stage of this electoral process. The NPC is subservient to the Party and is often described as a "rubber stamp" parliament, but the legislative process does usually include significant public consultation, and its deputies play a useful role in conveying information about the concerns and requests of the citizenry. The NPC has ten special committees led by ministerial-level Party cadres that focus and often take the lead on legislative work related to specific issues.

The NPCSC holds the power to interpret the Hong Kong Basic Law and to make laws for Hong Kong. Most notably, it drafted and promulgated the Hong Kong National Security Law in June 2020 and amended the Basic Law in March 2021 to introduce electoral changes designed to ensure that only pro-Beijing "patriots" could hold government posts. Founded in 1997, the **NPCSC Committee on the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region** is a ministerial-level working organ responsible for studying and advising on NPCSC powers regarding Hong Kong legislation and the interpretation and amendment of the Hong Kong Basic Law. It comprises six mainland members and six Chinese citizens with permanent residency in Hong Kong. An analogous NPCSC committee exists for work related to the Macao Basic Law.

Taiwan

The top policy coordination body on cross-strait relations is the **CCP Central Taiwan Affairs Leading Group** (CTALG). The general secretary chairs the group, reflecting the high importance of Taiwan affairs, but notably, since its founding in 1979, the body has not been upgraded to a commission like the Central Foreign Affairs Commission. Other members include the chairman of the CPPCC as deputy director; the Central Foreign Affairs Office (CFAO) director as secretary-general; a vice premier; a vice chairman of the Central Military Commission; the directors of the CCP General Office, the Propaganda Department, and the UFWD; the ministers of foreign affairs, commerce, and state security; and the director of the CTALG's administrative agency.

The **CCP Taiwan Work Office** (TWO), also known as the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, is a ministerial-level agency under the CCP Central Committee that promotes unification with Taiwan and manages cross-strait relations. It is more outward-facing than many domestic agencies because it handles mail, transport, and trade links with Taiwan; preparations for meetings with Taiwanese politicians and officials; Taiwan-related propaganda and political influence work; and a wide range of cultural, economic, and scholarly exchanges between the mainland and Taiwan. It also organizes the annual Straits Forum, Beijing's largest annual event promoting cultural, economic, and people-to-people exchanges across the Taiwan Strait. Its counterpart in Taiwan is the Mainland Affairs Council.

The **China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification (CCPPNR)** is a semi-official organization supported by the CPPCC and managed by the UFWD. It was founded in Beijing by the Taiwanese author Chen Yingzhen in 1988 to advocate Chinese unification and oppose Taiwan independence and has since grown to include over 200 chapters in over 90 countries. The CPPCC chairman serves as its president, the UFWD director serves as its executive vice president, and several deputy national-level United Front leaders serve as its vice presidents. It is most active as a Beijing-linked grassroots organization for overseas Chinese to demonstrate their pro-China credentials, to network with Chinese diplomats and officials, and to promote the Party line on Taiwan policy in their countries of residence.

The **Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS)** is technically a nongovernment “social group,” but it is in actuality a quasi-official organization founded by the TWO in 1991 to conduct cross-strait exchanges without the official imprimatur of the Party or the PRC. The ARATS president is a former ministerial-level director of the TWO. Its counterpart in Taiwan is the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), and it was an ARATS-SEF meeting in Hong Kong in late 1992 that produced the “1992 Consensus,” a formulation in which each side of the Taiwan Strait says that there is “one China” but agrees to disagree on their respective definitions to facilitate cross-strait interactions. ARATS-SEF talks also played an important role in opening the “Three Links” (postal, transportation, and trade) between mainland China and Taiwan in 2008 and in negotiating the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement in 2010. However, exchanges have only occurred when there is a KMT president in Taiwan who will explicitly endorse the 1992 Consensus, with no exchanges during the terms of DPP presidents Chen Shui-bian (2000–08), Tsai Ing-wen (2016–24), and Lai Ching-te (2024–present).

The **All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots (ACFTC)** is a ministerial-level “people’s organization” of pro-Beijing Taiwanese people living in the People’s Republic of China that is part of the United Front ecosystem of the CPPCC. In recent years, it has become more active in the Party’s efforts to promote unification and oppose pro-autonomy politicians and movements in Taiwan.

The **Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang (RCCK)** is the largest of the eight satellite parties that support Communist Party leadership. It was founded in 1948 by leftist KMT general Li Jishen, who believed that Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek was betraying the legacy of KMT founder Sun Yat-sen and his Three Principles of the People (nationalism, democracy, and the people’s livelihood). Today, it has approximately 158,000 members, most of whom are intellectuals and professionals with family ties to KMT revolutionaries or other links with Taiwan. It focuses on advancing mainland China’s

relationship with the original KMT in Taiwan. The RCCK chairman is a deputy national-level NPCSC vice chairman, and its executive deputy chairman is a CPPCC vice chairman.

The **Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League** (TDSL) is the smallest of China's eight satellite parties. It was founded in Hong Kong in 1947 by members of the Taiwanese Communist Party and supported Taiwanese self-determination until its leaders were purged in 1958, during the Anti-Rightist Campaign. It is comprised of Taiwanese people who live on the mainland and currently numbers about 3,400 members. The TDSL chairman is a deputy national-level CPPCC vice chairman.

Hong Kong

The CCP's top policymaking institution on Hong Kong affairs is the **Central Leading Group on Hong Kong and Macao Affairs** (CLGHKMA). It reports to the elite 24-member Politburo and its 7-member Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), which discusses and approves top-level policy decisions regarding Hong Kong. The leader of the CLGHKMA is typically the executive vice premier, who sits on the PSC; the minister of public security (who is concurrently a state councilor and whose presence reflects Beijing's increasing focus on political security in the territory) and the director of the Central Hong Kong and Macao Work Office both serve as deputy leaders. The CLGHKMA was founded in 1978 as the Central Group on Hong Kong and Macao. It was upgraded to the Central Coordination Group on Hong Kong and Macao Affairs in 2003 after half a million Hongkongers marched against a proposed local national security law and then upgraded again to a central leading group in 2020 following record-breaking protests in Hong Kong against a bill to allow extradition to the mainland. Other CLGHKMA members usually include the UFWD director, the CFAO director, the minister of foreign affairs, the Party secretary and governor of Guangdong Province (which borders Hong Kong and Macao), and the directors of the Hong Kong Liaison Office and the Macao Liaison Office.

Xi has restructured the central Hong Kong and Macao affairs bureaucracy since the 2019–20 Hong Kong protests. From 1978 to 2023, the General Office of the CLGHKMA and the groups that preceded it were in the ministerial-level State Council Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (SCHKMAO), which was responsible for supervising the implementation of Beijing's policies toward Hong Kong. However, the institutional reforms announced in March 2023 established the **CCP Hong Kong and Macao Work Office** (HKMWO) under the CCP Central Committee, which took over the SCHKMAO's duties as the General Office of the CLGHKMA. These duties include conducting research; coordinating between the mainland and local governments; supervising implementation regarding policies such as "one country, two systems," Beijing's political leadership, Beijing's legal framework; upholding national security; safeguarding people's livelihoods; and integrating Hong Kong and Macao into China's overall development. The HKMWO retains the SCHKMAO

moniker, but a separate SCHKMAO no longer exists—in effect transferring responsibility for Hong Kong policy from the state to the Party.

Beijing's main presence in Hong Kong since 2000 has been the **Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region** (HKLO). The HKLO is a ministerial-level institution usually coterminous with the Party's Central Hong Kong Work Committee, which leads the CCP's work in Hong Kong. The HKLO is led by a mainland official, and its responsibilities include promoting Beijing's interests in Hong Kong politics, encouraging exchanges with the mainland, helping liaise between mainland and Hong Kong authorities, and organizing and lobbying for pro-Beijing politicians. The HKLO also owns the media entities *Ta Kung Pao*, *Wen Wei Po*, *Commercial Daily*, and Sino United Publishing. There is also an analogous but mainly symbolic Office of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China in Beijing.

The Hong Kong National Security Law, passed in Beijing in June 2020, led to the establishment of the deputy ministerial-level **Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region** (OSNS). The OSNS is a mainland agency directly subordinate to the CCP Central Committee and is not subject to Hong Kong law but can make laws for the territory. It has a different leader than the HKLO but is similarly led and staffed by mainland officials. Its duties are to conduct analysis, make recommendations, supervise local authorities, collect intelligence, and handle criminal cases related to Beijing's concept of national security in Hong Kong. Its jurisdiction is technically limited to cases that involve supposed foreign interference, either ones that local authorities are unable to address or that constitute a major imminent threat to national security. Beijing must approve OSNS involvement in either case.

Two other mainland institutions maintain an official presence in Hong Kong. Since the handover in 1997, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has, as stipulated in the Hong Kong Basic Law, supervised Hong Kong's external relations through a deputy ministerial-level **Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region**. The handover also saw China's military establish the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Hong Kong Garrison, a roughly 10,000-person force responsible for defending the territory that reports to the PLA Southern Theater Command, headquartered in Guangzhou. The Fourth Bureau of the Ministry of State Security handles intelligence work in Hong Kong.

Many other Chinese political institutions exert some influence in Hong Kong affairs. The 175-member **Standing Committee of the National People's Congress** (NPCSC), the main lawmaking body of China's national legislature, holds the power to interpret the Hong

Kong Basic Law and to make laws for Hong Kong. Most notably, it drafted and promulgated the National Security Law in June 2020 and amended the Basic Law in March 2021 to introduce electoral changes designed to ensure that only pro-Beijing “patriots” could hold government posts. Founded in 1997, the **NPCSC Committee on the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region** is a ministerial-level working organ of the national legislature responsible for studying and advising on the NPCSC’s powers regarding Hong Kong legislation and the interpretation and amendment of the Hong Kong Basic Law. It comprises six mainland members and six Chinese citizens with permanent residency rights in Hong Kong. There is also an NPCSC Committee on the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region, which has considerable overlap in leadership with its Hong Kong equivalent.

China has significant economic interests in Hong Kong and is trying to incorporate the territory into its overall national development planning, most notably through the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) plan, announced in a March 2017 government work report and outlined by the Central Committee and the State Council in February 2019. The plan is to transform Hong Kong, Macao, and nine nearby cities in Guangdong Province into an integrated metropolis through intercity infrastructure connectivity, commercial exchange, and policy coordination. The Party’s **Central Leading Group for Building the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area** was founded in 2018 and includes the executive vice premier as its director; the Party secretary of Guangdong and a vice premier as deputy directors; and the chief executive of Hong Kong, the chief executive of Macao, the director of the HKLO, the director of the Macao Liaison Office, and the executive deputy director of the CHKMWO as ordinary members. The institutional driver of the GBA project is the National Development and Reform Commission, which houses the administrative office of the GBALG.

Most of the day-to-day governing of Hong Kong is handled by pro-Beijing Hongkongers in the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, which was established following the 1997 handover and theoretically has jurisdiction over the territory’s domestic affairs. The current head of government is Chief Executive **John Lee Ka-chiu**, who was elected by a 1,500-member Election Committee—which is formed by elections held within 40 official special interest groups known as functional constituencies—and then appointed by the premier of the State Council in Beijing. The chief executive nominates 21 “principal officials” to serve as chief secretary for administration, financial secretary, justice secretary, their three deputies, and heads of other policy bureaus in the Hong Kong government, who are then appointed by the State Council. The chief executive presides over a consultative cabinet known as the Executive Council, which meets weekly and includes all 21 principal officials plus 16 nonofficial members who effectively serve as ministers without portfolio. The legislature is the unicameral Legislative Council (LegCo), which consists of 90 members elected from geographical, functional, and Election Committee constituencies.

Virtually all LegCo members now belong to the pro-Beijing camp, which includes several different political parties, the largest of which is currently the conservative Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong.

The chief executive chairs the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (CSNS), a group of senior local officials created under the Hong Kong National Security Law to lead the analysis, legislation, and protection of national security in the territory. The committee has extraordinary powers that are not subject to legal review, including approving prosecutions under the National Security Law and determining the electoral eligibility of candidates. Vetting of election candidates is conducted by the new National Security Department of the Hong Kong Police Force. The mainland official serving as HKLO director exerts a high level of influence over the CSNS by serving as its national security advisor.

Macao

Beijing governs Macao with a similar set of institutions, notably the **Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao Special Administrative Region**. Macao is located just over 60 kilometers across the Pearl River Estuary from central Hong Kong, but it is much smaller in both land area (approximately 30 square kilometers versus 1,110 square kilometers) and population (about 690,000 versus 7.33 million). It is the only Chinese territory where gambling is legal, making it a major destination for tourists from the mainland and across the region.

People

Xi Jinping (born June 1953) is the most important decision-maker in Chinese policies toward Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao and currently serves as Head of the CCP Central Leading Group on Taiwan Affairs. Xi also has a special interest after having served as director of the now-defunct Central Coordination Group on Hong Kong and Macao Affairs from 2007 to 2012.

Wang Huning (October 1955) is the Chairman of the CPPCC, the fourth-ranked leader in the Party, and currently serves as Deputy Head of the CCP Central Leading Group on Taiwan Affairs. He is a key architect of "Xi Jinping Thought" and is arguably the most influential policymaker regarding Taiwan aside from Xi, as well as a significant voice on policy toward Hong Kong and Macao. Wang was a student and then professor of international politics at Fudan University in Shanghai for over fifteen years, where he was a well-known advocate of "neo-authoritarianism." He was summoned to Beijing in 1995 to become a political advisor for then paramount leader Jiang Zemin in the CCP Central Policy Research Office, in which he served as director from 2002 to 2020. Wang worked for

Jiang's successor Hu Jintao and then for Xi Jinping and was the driving force behind the formulation and articulation of each leader's respective ideologies. Xi promoted him to the Politburo in 2012, made him director of the General Office of what is now the CCP Central Comprehensively Deepening Reform Commission (CCDRC) in 2014, appointed him to the Politburo Standing Committee in 2017 (as first secretary of the CCP Central Secretariat), and made him a deputy director of the CCDRC in 2020.

Li Ganjie (November 1964) is the Politburo member who serves as Director of the CCP United Front Work Department. He studied nuclear engineering at Tsinghua University from 1981-1989, when many future Xi allies were students or administrators there. He then worked at the National Nuclear Safety Administration from 1989-2016, including a stint at the Chinese Embassy in France from 1999-2000 and as the agency's director from 2006-2016. The NNSA came under the jurisdiction of what is now the Ministry of Ecology and Environment in 1998, and Li served as a Deputy Minister from 2008-2016 and as Minister from 2018-2020. He served in local governments as Deputy Party Secretary of Hebei Province from 2016-2017 and as Party Secretary of Shandong Province from 2020-2022. He was Director of the CCP Organization Department from April 2023 to April 2025, when he became Director of the CCP United Front Work Department, in an unprecedented job swap with fellow Politburo member **Shi Taifeng**. For Li, this move represented a demotion and reduced his chances of winning a seat on the Politburo Standing Committee in 2027, as organization work is a more important and sensitive political task than United Front work, despite the rising profile of the latter during Xi's leadership.

Taiwan

Wang Yi (October 1953) is the Director of the General Office of the CCP Central Leading Group on Taiwan Affairs, responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Party's top body focused solely on Taiwan policy. He is also China's top diplomat, serving as both Director of the CCP Central Foreign Affairs Office and as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Wang succeeded former CFAO director Yang Jiechi on the 24-person Politburo at the 20th Party Congress in October 2022. Xi exempted Wang, who turned 69 in 2022, from the mandate that leaders aged 68 or older in the year of a Party Congress are ineligible for a Politburo seat, likely because of Xi's trust in Wang's loyalty to his assertive vision of Chinese diplomacy and due to a lack of suitably senior potential replacements. Wang is a career diplomat and fluent Japanese speaker who has served as China's ambassador to Japan, director of the CCP Taiwan Work Office from 2008 to 2013, and foreign minister from 2013 to 2022. Wang was reappointed to the latter role in July 2023 after his successor Qin Gang disappeared from public view a month earlier. Wang's great talent has been in adapting his diplomatic style to suit the political climate: he pursued a principled but conciliatory line

with Japan during his ambassadorship but proved fully capable of deploying “wolf warrior” rhetoric.

Song Tao (April 1955) is the Director of the CCP Taiwan Work Office. Song served as director of the CCP International Department from 2015 to 2022 before he was reassigned to a CPPCC committee, a move that usually indicates imminent retirement (Song was past the mandated retirement age of 65 for ministerial-level officials), but he was unexpectedly reassigned to lead the TWO after the 20th Party Congress, despite not being on the new Central Committee. Song worked in Fujian Province during the 1980s and 1990s while Xi was rising through the ranks there before moving into the foreign affairs system and rising to become ambassador to Guyana, ambassador to the Philippines, deputy minister of foreign affairs, and deputy director of the CFAO. His relative inexperience in Taiwan affairs suggests that Xi and higher-level leaders will continue to dominate policymaking.

Zheng Jianbang (January 1957) is the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang and a deputy national-level Vice Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee. He is the grandson of Zheng Dongguo, a commander in the Republic of China Armed Forces during the Chinese Civil War, who surrendered to the Red Army after the Siege of Changchun in 1948 but was allowed to serve in senior United Front positions after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, including as a vice chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang. Zheng Jianbang has spent most of his career with the same, rising through its propaganda and liaison departments, before serving as a vice chairman from 2010 to 2017, as executive vice chairman from 2017 to 2022, and as chairman since 2022. He became a deputy national-level leader when serving as a CPPCC vice chairman from 2018 to 2023 before switching to an equivalent role within the NPC in 2023.

He Baoxiang (April 1963) is the Executive Vice Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang and a deputy national-level CPPCC Vice Chairman. He began his career in a rubber seal factory in Tianjin before moving back to his hometown of Yueyang in Hunan Province to work as a local official from 1986 to 2002. He then served as president of the Hunan Provincial Industrial and Commercial Federation from 2002 to 2016, vice chairman of the Hunan CPPCC from 2008 to 2012, and deputy governor of Hunan from 2011 to 2022. He served as a vice chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang from 2017 to 2022. He has been the executive vice chairman since 2022 and a CPPCC vice chairman since 2023.

Su Hui (May 1956) is the Chairman of the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League and a deputy national-level CPPCC Vice Chairman. She was born in the city of Changchun in Jilin Province, but her ancestral hometown is Tainan in Taiwan. Her father, Cai Xiao, served as chairman of the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League from 1979 to 1983

and on the CCP Central Committee from 1973 to 1982. He was born and raised in Taiwan but moved to the mainland in 1934 to join the Red Army and eventually reached the rank of senior colonel in the years following the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Su is a financial technocrat who rose through the ranks of the Beijing Municipal Finance Bureau from 1982 to 2009 and was director of the Beijing Municipal Statistics Bureau from 2009 to 2012. She also served as a vice president of the ACFTC from 2007 to 2017 and as its Party secretary from 2015 to 2017. She joined the satellite party Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League in 2007, was one of its vice chairmen from 2012 to 2017, and has been its chairman since 2017. She became a CPPCC vice chairman in 2018.

Zhang Zhijun (February 1953) is the President of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits. He rose through the ranks of the CCP International Department, where he focused on North America, Oceania, and Northern Europe, and was posted as a first secretary in the Chinese Embassy to the United Kingdom from 1991 to 1994. He served as a deputy director of the International Department from 2000 to 2009, Party secretary and executive deputy minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2009 to 2013, director of the TWO from 2013 to 2018, and director of the NPC Foreign Affairs Committee from 2018 to 2023. He has served in his current position since 2018. **Long Mingbiao** (May 1962), a veteran of the CCP Taiwan Work Office, is the Executive Vice President of the ARATS.

Zheng Jianmin (June 1965) is the President of the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots. He was born in Taining County in Fujian Province, but his ancestral hometown is Taipei in Taiwan. He earned a doctorate in geography and spent most of his career as a land management official in Fujian Province. He served as deputy governor of Fujian Province from 2018 to 2023 and has held his current position since 2023. He is a member of the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League, one of the eight satellite parties that answer to the Communist Party, serving as one of its vice chairmen since 2017. **Ji Bin** (September 1966) is the ACFTC Party Secretary and an alternate member of the CCP Central Committee. He grew up in mainland China, but his ancestral hometown is Taichung in Taiwan. Ji spent two decades working on Eurasian affairs at the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries before becoming a vice president of the ACFTC in 2007. He has also served as its Party secretary since 2023.

Hong Kong

Zhao Leji (March 1957) is the Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, the third-ranked leader in the Party, and is ultimately responsible for Beijing's legislative work regarding the Hong Kong Basic Law and the Macao Basic Law. He spent almost three decades as a local cadre in his native Qinghai Province, where he was governor from 1999 to 2003 (the youngest in China at the time) and Party secretary from 2003 to 2007. He then worked as Party secretary of Shaanxi Province from 2007 to 2012, joined the Politburo as Xi's first

director of the CCP Organization Department from 2012 to 2017 (when he played a pivotal role in promoting the first wave of Xi allies to high office), and ascended to the Politburo Standing Committee as secretary of the CCP Central Commission for Discipline Inspection from 2017 to 2022. He is a fellow Shaanxi native of Xi and is thought to have had connections with Xi's father, Xi Zhongxun, through his father, Zhao Ximin, and his older relative, Zhou Shoushan, who were both local officials in Qinghai and Shaanxi.

Ding Xuexiang (September 1962) is the Executive Vice Premier, the sixth-ranked leader in the Communist Party, and the Head of both the CCP Central Leading Group on Hong Kong and Macao Affairs and the CCP Leading Group for Building the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area. Except for Xi, he is arguably the most important policymaker on Hong Kong and Macao affairs. Ding, who is a close Xi ally, is intimately familiar with Xi's thinking on Hong Kong affairs, having previously served for a decade in the CCP General Office as Xi's chief of staff from 2017 to 2022. He accompanied Xi on his visits to Hong Kong for the handover anniversary celebrations in 2017 and 2022. Ding has no background in Hong Kong affairs and likely channels Xi's views in his roles.

Ding's deputies on the CCP Central Leading Group on Hong Kong and Macao Affairs are Li Ganjie; **Chen Wenqing** (January 1960), a former spymaster who sits on the Politburo as Secretary of the CCP Political and Legal Affairs Commission; and **Wang Xiaohong** (July 1957), a career police chief who serves as Minister for Public Security and as a State Councilor. Ding's deputies on the CCP Leading Group for Building the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area are two Politburo members: **He Lifeng** (February 1955), a Vice Premier of the State Council and one of Xi's closest allies; and **Huang Kunming** (November 1956), the Party Secretary of Guangdong Province.

Xia Baolong (December 1952) is the Director of the CCP Hong Kong and Macao Work Office and Executive Deputy Head of the CCP Central Leading Group on Hong Kong and Macao Affairs. Xi tapped Xia to replace Zhang Xiaoming at the HKMWO in February 2020, following Zhang's demotion after months of protests in Hong Kong against Beijing's rising political influence. Xia is a career local official who worked under Xi and with several Xi allies in Zhejiang Province during the 2000s and 2010s. His lack of experience in Hong Kong affairs shows Xi's emphasis on political loyalty to Beijing over demands for more autonomy by the local population. Xia is under U.S. sanctions for his role in the promulgation of the National Security Law. **Zhou Ji** (May 1964), a veteran of local government in his native Hubei Province, is the ministerial-level Executive Deputy Director of the HKMWO.

Zheng Yanxiong (August 1963) is the Director of the PRC Hong Kong Liaison Office. He was promoted to the role in January 2023 after serving as director of Beijing's Office for Safeguarding National Security in Hong Kong since July 2020. He spent the previous two

decades rising through local government in Guangdong Province, including several years in Shanwei City, just up the coast from Hong Kong, where he worked on the provincial Party standing committee with Xi ally Li Xi. While Zheng may be a trusted enforcer and implementer, he is both geographically and politically far from Beijing's policymaking and is not on the Central Committee. Zheng replaced Luo Huining, a Xi ally who worked closely under Zhao Leji in Qinghai Province in the mid-2000s and the first HKLO director with no work experience in Hong Kong affairs. Luo was parachuted into Hong Kong in January 2020 to replace Wang Zhimin after his dismissal for mishandling protests and local elections.

Dong Jingwei (November 1963) is the Director of Beijing's Office for Safeguarding National Security in Hong Kong. He is a veteran of the security services, having worked for over a decade as head of the national security department of Hebei Province and then as a deputy minister of state security with responsibility for counterespionage work. **Cui Jianchun** (July 1964) is the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Commissioner in Hong Kong. He began his career as an accountant and manager at the state-owned China National Nuclear Corporation before being chosen in the open selection process for senior diplomats in 2011 and later serving as China's ambassador to Kuwait, Guyana, and Nigeria. Major General **Peng Jingtang** is Commander of the PLA Garrison in Hong Kong. He once served as chief of staff at the Xinjiang headquarters of the People's Armed Police.

Shen Chunyao (May 1960) is the Director of the NPCSC Committee on the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, directs the equivalent committee for Macao, and serves as Director of the powerful Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee, which handles the drafting and procedure of most legislation. Shen is a legal specialist with a background in international law who has worked in the NPC for the last two decades and has led the legislature's work on Hong Kong and Macao since 2018. He played an important technical role in drafting the National Security Law and, in 2022, was promoted from an alternate member of the 19th Central Committee to a full member of the 20th Central Committee.

Liu Cigui (September 1955) is the Director of the CPPCC Committee for Liaison with Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Overseas Chinese. He previously led the CPPCC Foreign Affairs Committee from 2020 to 2023 but has no specific experience working on Hong Kong. He was previously the Party secretary of Hainan Province. Before that, he spent most of his career in Fujian Province, where he worked as a deputy to Xi's confidant He Lifeng in Xiamen in the mid-2000s as well as under Xi's overall leadership of the province. Liu left the Central Committee last year because of his age, but his political connections likely explain why he remains in the central government.

Leung Chun-ying (also known as C.Y. Leung) (August 1954) is the highest-ranking Hongkonger in the mainland political system. He has been a deputy national-level Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference since March 2017. Having served one term as chief executive of Hong Kong from 2012 to 2017, Leung's staunchly pro-Beijing politics saw him defend unpopular constitutional and educational reforms proposed by Beijing that contributed to the Umbrella Revolution, during which hundreds of thousands of people participated in protests and the Occupy Central sit-ins overtook Hong Kong's downtown in late 2014. Amid further civil unrest, and facing a bribery accusation, Leung declined to run for a second term. In his current position, he was a vocal critic of the 2019 protest movement and an advocate of the National Security Law. Earlier in his career he trained as a surveyor and made a fortune in the real estate industry, through which he entered local politics on the Hong Kong Basic Law Consultative Committee in 1985 and served as a property advisor to former Chinese premier Zhu Rongji. Prior to his election as chief executive, he was the convenor of the Executive Council from 1999 to 2011.

John Lee (also known as Lee Ka-chiu) (December 1957) was selected as the Chief Executive of Hong Kong by the Beijing-controlled Election Committee in May 2022. As the only mainland-approved contender, he became the sole candidate and received 99.4% of the vote. Lee rose through the ranks of the Hong Kong Police Force from 1977 to 2012 before becoming undersecretary for security in 2012 and then secretary for security in 2017. In the latter position, Lee played a leading role in the Hong Kong government's crackdown against the pro-democracy movement and in the implementation of Beijing's National Security Law. Lee's favor in Beijing was confirmed when former Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam appointed him chief secretary for administration—the second-highest public office in Hong Kong—in June 2021. Lee is the first chief executive who is not a business executive or a career bureaucrat, and his lack of deep ties to Hong Kong's traditional political elite means that he is an especially loyal servant of Beijing and leans heavily on Beijing's Hong Kong Liaison Office for advice and support. In 2024, he enacted Hong Kong's own domestic version of Beijing's National Security Law, as required by Article 23 of the Hong Kong Basic Law, which echoed much of Beijing's version but expanded it to also cover treason and state secrets. It further eroded political liberties, but its direct impact was more modest relative to the political earthquake that was the 2020 National Security Law.

Macao

Zheng Xincong (November 1963) is the Director of the Macao Liaison Office, a National Security Advisor to the Macao Committee for Safeguarding National Security, a Deputy Director of the CCP Hong Kong and Macao Work Office, and a full member of the CCP Central Committee. Before moving to Macao in 2021, he spent his entire career as a local

official in his native Fujian Province, where he worked under several senior Xi associates and indirectly under Xi himself, when the latter was Party secretary of the province from 2002 to 2007.

Edmund Ho (March 1955) is the highest-ranking Macanese in the mainland political system and has been a deputy national-level CPPCC Vice Chairman since 2010. He is the son of Ho Yin (1908–83), a businessman from Guangzhou who escaped the Japanese invasions of mainland China and then British Hong Kong by fleeing in 1941 to neutral Portuguese Macao, where he made a fortune in money changing and the unofficial gold trade and served as a key intermediary between the Portuguese dictatorship and the Chinese Communist Party. Edmund attended high school and university and began his career in Canada, where he earned a degree in business administration and qualified as a certified public accountant and chartered auditor. He returned to Macao after his father's death in 1983, where he took over the family-owned Tai Fung Bank and served as general manager from 1983 to 1999. He soon entered local politics as a vice president of the Macao Legislative Council from 1988 to 1999, becoming closely involved in preparations for the transfer of Macao's sovereignty from Portugal to China in 1999. He also held roles in mainland political institutions such as the CPPCC, the NPCSC, and as a deputy chairman of the United Front organization the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce from 1993 to 1999. He then became the first chief executive of Macao, serving for two terms from 1999 to 2009.

Sam Hou Fai (May 1962) is the Chief Executive of Macao. He was the sole candidate in the 2024 Macanese chief executive election held by the 400-member Election Commission. He replaced Ho Iat Seng, who served as chief executive from 2019 to 2024 but declined to run for a second term due to health problems. Sam is a mainlander who was born in Zhongshan City in Guangdong Province, studied law at Peking University in Beijing, and then practiced law on the mainland. He moved to Macao in 1986 and subsequently studied Portuguese language, culture, and law at the University of Coimbra in Portugal before completing further legal studies at the University of Macao and the Macao Magistrates Training Center. He served as Macao's top judge and the president of the Court of Final Appeal from 1999 to 2024. He is a loyal member of the pro-Beijing establishment in Macao.

Policy

Taiwan

Xi Jinping's early political career in Fujian Province was closely tied to Taiwan, primarily through his efforts to attract Taiwanese investment. As a local leader, his interactions with Taiwan were largely transactional, focused on bringing in capital to support local businesses in Fujian. However, over the course of his three terms as China's paramount

leader, Xi's stance on Taiwan has evolved in response to his perception of shifting political dynamics in cross-strait relations. Yet he has never wavered from the Party's bedrock "One China" principle, which states that there is only one China in the world, that the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate representative of the whole of China, and that Taiwan is part of China's territory.

In the early years of his presidency, Xi largely continued the approach of his predecessor, Hu Jintao, by prioritizing greater economic integration with Taiwan, as evident in his support for the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement in 2013, which aimed to enhance economic ties between the two sides. In 2015, Xi took a historic step by meeting then ROC president Ma Ying-jeou in Singapore, the first meeting between the leader of the PRC and the leader of the ROC since 1949. However, the trade agreement faced strong opposition in Taiwan, resulting in civil unrest and its indefinite postponement.

Beijing's relationship with Taipei has grown more confrontational since Ma left office in 2016. While his political party, the KMT, opposes unification but supports closer cross-strait integration, subsequent elections have been won by candidates from the pro-autonomy DPP, namely Tsai Ing-wen, who served two terms from 2016 to 2024, and Lai Ching-te, who won the most recent election in January 2024. The DPP does not accept the 1992 Consensus, the principle that both sides of the Taiwan Strait are part of the same China, which Beijing views as part of the One China principle and an essential prerequisite to political dialogue between the PRC and ROC governments.

Since 2016, Xi has strengthened Beijing's efforts to influence Taiwanese society, interfere in Taiwanese politics, and increase its military capabilities in the Taiwan Strait. The latter has included regular air and naval incursions by the PLA into Taiwan's air defense identification zone and regularly involves crossing the "median line" between Fujian Province and the west coast of Taiwan. He has also conducted unprecedented military exercises around Taiwan, including after former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August 2022, after President Tsai returned from a trip that involved meeting new U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in April 2023, and after President Lai gave a controversial inauguration speech in May 2024. These maneuvers increase the chance of a military accident or misunderstanding around Taiwan that could escalate into a security crisis. They also raise the possibility that Xi may pursue more aggressive actions toward Taiwan, such as a quarantine, blockade, or seizure of outlying islands, although at present, these scenarios remain unlikely.

At the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, Xi reaffirmed a longstanding linkage between "national reunification" with Taiwan and China's overarching goal to achieve "national rejuvenation" by 2049—and arguably strengthened the political emphasis by declaring the former an "inevitable requirement" of the latter. He reiterated this formulation in his report

to the 20th Party Congress in October 2022 as well as Beijing's longstanding position that it "absolutely does not promise to abandon the use of force" in response to "foreign interference" and "Taiwan independence activists," suggesting that China's military exercises near Taiwan are aimed more at deterring efforts to change the status quo rather than accelerating any timeline for an invasion.

Yet, despite rising military tensions and fewer political exchanges, many of Xi's policies toward Taiwan remain consistent with those of previous Chinese leaders, including his preference for "peaceful unification" over the use of military force. More practically, Beijing still welcomes Taiwanese politicians who accept the 1992 Consensus, still encourages Taiwanese businesses to invest and trade with the mainland, and still promotes cross-strait cultural, educational, and people-to-people exchanges. A recent example of positive cross-strait interactions occurred in November 2022, when a letter from Terry Gou, the founder of Foxconn, a major Apple supplier, helped convince Xi to ease zero-COVID lockdown measures because they were affecting business operations in China.

Hong Kong

Xi's authoritative report to the 20th Party Congress in October 2022 suggested that the "one country, two systems" model for governing Hong Kong and Macao will increasingly resemble "one country, one system." He called for measures to "implement the Party Central Committee's overall power to govern," to ensure that only "patriots rule Hong Kong," and to implement local laws that "safeguard national security." John Lee's first term as chief executive has seen the enactment of a local version of Beijing's National Security Law under Article 23 of Hong Kong's Basic Law, a measure that further erodes political freedoms, the rule of law, and the integrity of the civil service.

Xi is undeterred by U.S. sanctions against several Chinese and Hong Kong officials involved in the National Security Law. In his report, he said that the Party would "form a broader United Front in support of 'one country, two systems' at home and abroad," suggesting more active efforts under Wang Huning and Shi Taifeng to co-opt and coerce the population of Hong Kong to accept and advance Beijing's rule. He also said that the Party will "fight against anti-China and chaotic forces in Hong Kong" and "prevent and curb the intervention of external forces in Hong Kong affairs," suggesting a harsh response to foreign critiques of Beijing's policies.

Xi said that Beijing was committed to deepening Hong Kong's economic and social ties to the mainland, including through GBA projects, and to improving Hong Kong's position in international finance, trade, transport, innovation, and culture. But Xi's focus on security above the rule of law means that Hong Kong's status as a global finance hub is likely to

diminish, although for the foreseeable future, the territory will maintain a significant but narrower role as a capital gateway for China.

Beijing is focusing on improving economic development and social services in Hong Kong as ways to consolidate support for the pro-Beijing establishment. In July 2022, Xi visited Hong Kong to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the handover and told his audience that “what the people of Hong Kong desire most is a better life, a bigger apartment, more business startup opportunities, better education for kids, and better elderly care.” Relatedly, Lee’s administration has prioritized addressing sky-high property prices and extreme economic inequality.

Macao

Portugal transferred sovereignty of Macao to China in 1999, but unlike in Hong Kong, Beijing had already established de facto control over local governance. This shift occurred during the Cultural Revolution when, following widespread anticolonial riots in 1966, the Portuguese authorities ceded control of ethnic Chinese community affairs to local pro-Beijing groups in 1967. Political power in Macao was then largely shared among these factions, forming a coalition of influential local elites. After the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on the Question of Macao was signed in 1987, Beijing began cultivating Macanese officials of mainland origin to hold positions within the post-handover government. Mainland influence strengthened in 2024 with the selection of Sam Hou Fai, a mainland-born former judge, as the fourth chief executive of Macao, signaling Beijing’s tightening control.

Macao’s economy has traditionally relied heavily on gambling and tourism, with a small group of elite families controlling much of the gambling sector. However, the 2007–08 global financial crisis exposed vulnerabilities in Macao’s economic structure, causing rapid inflation and a significant decline in tourism revenues. Xi’s anticorruption campaigns have further strained the industry by curbing the flow of high-rollers and mainland money into Macao’s casinos. These pressures were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a sharp decline in travel, underscoring Macao’s dangerous overreliance on a single sector.

Macao has responded by seeking to diversify its economy, strengthen its integration with mainland China, and preemptively control civil unrest. After the global financial crisis, local authorities introduced a “wealth partaking scheme,” which provides residents with an annual cash payment. Macao has also deepened its collaboration with Zhuhai, a neighboring mainland city in Guangdong Province, to establish industrial zones focused on research and development and high-tech manufacturing. This initiative is part of a broader effort to incorporate Macao and Hong Kong into the GBA. Xi has expressed strong support

for this initiative, highlighting it as a critical step in reducing Macao's dependency on gambling and positioning the region as a model for China's "one country, two systems" framework.